CHAPTER 6 Other Statutory Requirements

In addition to the analysis of impacts discussed in Chapter 5 (Environmental Consequences), CEQA and NEPA also require that the analysis of a project's growth-inducing impacts and its incremental contribution to related impacts caused by other projects (cumulative impacts).

6.1 Growth Inducement

6.1.1 Regulatory Framework

CEQA and NEPA require that the EIR/EIS examine the growth-inducing effects of a project [CEQA Guidelines, 15125(a); NEPA, 40 CFR 1508.8(b)]. The environmental document must include a discussion of the "changes induced in population distribution, population concentration, the human use of the land (including commercial and residential development), health and safety problems caused by the physical changes, and other aspects of the resource base such as water, scenic quality, and public services."

6.1.2 Growth Inducement Analysis

This analysis is an estimation of direct or indirect ways in which the project may foster economic or population growth or the construction of additional housing in the surrounding area. The key consideration is whether the project would encourage growth, in the context of the region's plans, natural setting and growth patterns.

Growth inducement is difficult to measure since the impacts are generally indirect and occur over an extended period of time after the project is completed. The relationship is generally evaluated as either facilitating planned growth or inducing unplanned growth. A new roadway may create additional market pressure for growth because one constraint for development has been lifted. However, whether or not the project will induce unplanned growth depends on political, physical, and socioeconomic factors as well. The proposed project is intended to meet the existing and/or projected traffic demand based upon the local land use plans.

The analytical technique used for evaluating growth inducement of the Willits Bypass is called "factor analysis," which assesses the capacity for growth within this area

based upon the cost of land, local government plans and policies, the available labor pool, land use and terrain, commute time, access, and infrastructure. The factors are evaluated for their overall effect on promoting or restraining growth.

6.1.3 Factors

The cost of land in Willits and surrounding areas is inexpensive relative to the cities and vineyard-rich agricultural areas to the south. Additionally, local plans are not opposed to growth in Willits and in areas adjacent to Willits, given minor infrastructure modifications. The proposed project would also improve commute times along US 101 through the project area.

However, the proposed project is not expected to induce significant levels of growth in the project area because it would not remove some key constraints to development in this area. Growth that would be an indirect effect of the proposed project would be limited to travelers' services such as gasoline and fast-food providers at the interchange of Alternative E3 and S.R. 20. Terrain in this area is prone to landsliding, which constrains large-scale development.

Other constraints to development in this area are the floodplain north and east of Willits, infrastructure limitations in the Brooktrails area and the limited amount of available labor.

6.1.3.1 Cost of Land

The value of land within the City of Willits is low, relative to that in nearby cities. Farmland in Mendocino County is less expensive than that in several other nearby counties. Relatively inexpensive land is generally attractive to potential development.

Based on real estate transactions recorded by the Mendocino County Assessor's Office between January 1990 and December 2000, land in Willits is substantially less expensive than in two of the larger cities to the south along U.S. 101, Ukiah (population 15,000) and Cloverdale (population 6,425).

As Table 6-1 shows, the average value per square foot (not including the value of improvements) of residential and vacant land was worth far less in Willits than in the other two cities. The cost of commercial land was also less, but somewhat comparable to that in Cloverdale.

Table 6-1. 1990 - 2000 Property Sales Data (Dollar Value/Sq Ft)[9]

City	Residential	Commercial Land	Vacant Land
Cloverdale	$1.98	$1.76	$1.17
Ukiah	$1.80	$3.13	$1.30
Willits	$0.30	$1.13	$0.22

Source: Assessor's data for sales by land use type (County Assessor's data accessed via Experian)

As the data in Table 6-2 show, the per-acre value of farmland and structures in Mendocino County was higher than in Humboldt County to the north, and 67 percent of the value in nearby Lake County. Agricultural land was worth far less in Mendocino County in 1997 than in the vineyard-rich counties of Napa and Sonoma.

Table 6-2. Average Value of Farmland and Buildings per Acre (1997)

County	Average Value per Acre
Humboldt	$1,118
Lake	$2,563
Mendocino	$1,728
Napa	$11,629
Sonoma	$5,211

Source: US Department of Agriculture, 1997 Census of Agriculture

6.1.3.2 Local Government Plans and Policies

The Bypass would remove a barrier to Willits' plans for revitalizing its downtown. City representatives have stated their opposition to bypass features that could draw commercial activity away from downtown Willits. This attitude would minimize opportunities for growth adjacent to the bypass.

Willits General Plan

The Willits General Plan includes the Willits Bypass Project; it also includes a direct connection between downtown Willits and the bypass, which is not provided by the proposed project. Such an interchange could draw commercial development away from its current location (specifically, businesses located along the "Miracle Mile"

[9] These data exclude the value of improvements. Value is based on the value of a square foot of land. These data have not been adjusted for inflation. However, because the findings are based solely on transactions between 1989 and 2001, inflation is not expected to have an appreciable effect on findings.

along U.S. 101 south of S.R. 20). However, the project does not preclude construction of a direct connection in the future.

Willits is currently preparing a Downtown Specific Plan, which anticipates the removal of through traffic from Main Street (U.S. 101) through the city. It is hoped that removing through traffic from the heart of Willits will make this area more conducive to visitors and residents, thus drawing business activity to this area. The Willits Bypass is part of a planned regional transportation system and contributes to Willits' plans to promote economic growth.

The Willits General Plan anticipates growth at existing rates, until reaching build-out in 2020 at a population of 7,700. The valley alternatives would not foster growth or create capacity to accommodate growth above and beyond what has been permitted by the Willits General Plan and the Brooktrails Specific Plan. Growth at the local level is fundamentally controlled by the land use plans of Willits and Mendocino County.

Brooktrails Specific Plan

Residential development planned for by the Brooktrails Specific Plan would not be affected by the proposed alternatives. Currently, infrastructure constraints (including the need for an alternative access to Sherwood Road and the need for increased water capacity) limit the amount of housing that may be developed in this area. The proposed project would not remove these constraints to development.

Mendocino County Zoning Code

Mendocino County's plans for residential development discourage large-scale growth outside of the areas serviced by existing communities' infrastructures. Land uses conducive to population growth are generally found adjacent to existing communities.

The largest areas of land adjacent to the City of Willits are agricultural lands (to the east), rangelands (to the west) and several low-density rural residential areas. These land uses are not conducive to large increases in residential population. However, there are small areas of suburban residential zoning adjacent to Willits to the southeast, southwest, and to the north (the Brooktrails subdivision is also zoned for suburban residential development).

Suburban residential areas in Mendocino County allow lots sizes as small as 557.4 sq m (6,000 sq ft). The areas that the county has zoned for Suburban Residential use adjacent to Willits are the only areas in which growth outside of either Willits or Brooktrails would be expected within the project area. These areas are intended for population growth and the expansion of public services.

Terrain

The floodplain to the north and east of Willits is expected to restrict development at the northern end of Alternatives C1T, J1T, LT and, to a lesser extent, E3. Unstable slopes are expected to restrict development at the interchange between Alternative E3 and S.R. 20. These factors would not be problematic at the southern end of the build alternatives.

As seen in the portion of the "Environmental Consequences" discussion pertaining to Geology and Soils (Section 5.1), the area along the southern portion of Alternative E3 is highly prone to landsliding because of the high moisture content of the soil in this area. Conversations with Mendocino County's Planning Department indicated that the topography along Alternative E3 makes large-scale development of any kind in this area unlikely.

The northern termini of Alternatives C1T, J1T, and LT are all adjacent to the floodplain (Map 14). This condition would be expected to constrain development at the northern end of these alternatives.

The floodplain does not extend to the southern end of any of the bypass alternatives. The terrain in this area (where the proposed bypass alternatives diverge from the existing highway) would not present an obstacle to growth.

Labor Pool

The data in Table 6-3 indicate that wages are not higher, nor is the labor pool larger, in Willits than in other nearby communities. Labor pool characteristics would not be expected to either constrain or attract growth to this area.

The per-employee payroll in the Willits zip code area in 1997 was $19,650. In Mendocino County as a whole, the per-employee payroll (average wage) was $21,255.

Data from the Employment Development Department indicate that the available labor pool in Willits is less than 200 workers. The nearby community of Ukiah has almost three times the supply of unemployed workers.

Table 6-3. Labor Supply Characteristics for Willits and Surrounding Areas

Area	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment Number	Unemployment Rate
Covelo	480	440	40	8.4%
Fort Bragg	3,300	3,120	180	5.5%
Point Arena	220	180	40	16.7%
Ukiah	7,320	6,860	460	6.3%
Willits	2,450	2,290	160	6.5%
Mendocino County	42,340	39,530	2,810	6.6%

Source: California Employment Development Department, 1999

Commute Time

The time savings for both commuters passing through the project area and those originating in or bound for Willits could increase this area's attractiveness to potential residents.

Travel time between geographic points may influence the redistribution of economic development and population. The current U.S. 101 alignment serves both local traffic and through traffic, whereas the Willits Bypass would divert through traffic from downtown Willits.

By re-routing U.S. 101 from downtown Willits, the bypass alternatives would alleviate traffic congestion problems within the city. This would reduce the amount of time commuters spend in Willits. The proposed project would not increase highway capacity between Willits and nearby cities, however.

According to the *Willits Bypass Traffic Report*, by 2028, travel time through the project area is expected to be over 30 minutes. Travel time through the project area

was estimated to be less than ten minutes for Alternative E3 and for the full Alternatives C1, J1, and L.[10]

The bypass alternatives would provide a fairly substantial reduction in commute times for workers who pass through the city to work. Similarly, the bypass alternatives would remove much of the through traffic that creates congestion within the city for workers utilizing city streets either to enter or exit the area.

Access

The proposed alternatives would increase accessibility only at the proposed interchange of Alternative E3 and S.R. 20. All of the other interchanges proposed as part of this project would be between the bypass alternatives and the existing route of U.S. 101. The valley alternatives would allow development in Willits to continue at essentially the same pace as currently anticipated. Alternatives J1T, C1T, and LT place restrictions on additional development beyond that envisioned in the Willits' General Plan by limiting freeway access to the city's street system.

The various alternatives share certain design characteristics that limit the possibility of future development adjacent to the bypass interchanges. The westerly E3 alternative would have restricted access interchanges at U.S. 101 north and south of Willits and an interchange with S.R. 20, which connects Fort Bragg and Willits. The valley alternatives (J1T, C1T, and LT) would have restricted access interchanges with U.S. 101 north and south of Willits only. There would not be any access points to these bypass alternatives except at the north and south interchanges with U.S. 101.

The access and interchange design of the alternatives would not be growth inducing in the vicinity of the interchange with the existing U.S. 101 because the limited/restricted access feature would ensure no access between the interchanges joining the bypass with the existing route.

Alternative E3 would be the only alternative with a direct link to S.R. 20 that would provide an interchange at S.R. 20. This area is currently accessible by way of S.R.

[10] Travel time estimates are for the *original* Alternatives C1, J1, and L as opposed to the truncated alternatives. Because the truncated modifications of these alternatives would have the effect of removing through traffic from within the most concentrated areas of the City, commute times on the truncated alternatives are likely to be similar to those on the "full" versions of these alternatives.

20. However, Alternative E3 would result in a considerable increase in the amount of traffic passing through this area and would provide an opportunity for this traffic to leave the highway and access local streets and roads by way of S.R. 20.

Local Infrastructure

Infrastructure is not expected to constrain development in Willits. Brooktrails' development is dependent upon the provision of some infrastructure improvements.

The most recent version of the Willits General Plan anticipated the need for only minor improvements in local infrastructure in order to meet the demands of population growth. The valley alternatives are not expected to adversely affect the city's planned infrastructure improvements.

Population growth in the Brooktrails subdivision, on the other hand, depends upon the provision of both additional water capacity and an alternative means of accessing the area.

Constraints

Mendocino County's Regional Transportation Plan (1990 Update) states that "On U.S. 101, traffic and control conditions inhibit traffic service at Hopland [south of the project area], Willits, and Laytonville [north of the project area]."[11] These areas of reduced traffic service present obstacles to traffic movement along the U.S. 101 corridor in this region of California. These areas increase commute times and make growth less likely to occur in areas adjacent to the highway corridor.

Other Factors

Within the City of Willits, the proposed project would not remove any of the constraints on housing development that have been identified in the Willits General Plan Housing Element. These constraints include market factors that have placed homeownership beyond the reach of Willits' residents and reductions in state and federal support for housing programs.

Additionally, there is currently no shortage of developable sites within the city with access to the highway. According to the Willits General Plan, there is sufficient

[11] *Regional Transportation Plan Mendocino County 1990 Update*, Mendocino Council of Governments, January 1992, page N-10.

developable land in Willits to accommodate over 1,600 new units. The vacancy rate and price of housing in this area currently are consistent with conditions that would seem to favor increased housing development, but the amount of residential construction in the project area has not been substantial. The Willits Bypass would not be expected to remove obstacles to development in this area. There is sufficient planned housing available within the city, as well as in other communities in the area where growth may occur.

Other than the short-term population and economic growth during the construction period, the bypass would not be expected to encourage or facilitate other activities that could adversely affect the environment.

6.2 Cumulative Impacts Analysis

6.2.1 Regulatory Framework

Evidence is increasing that the most disturbing environmental effects may result not from the direct effects of individual projects, but from the cumulative effects of individually minor projects over time. The cumulative impact from two or more projects is the change in the environment that results from the incremental impact of the proposed project when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. Environmental cumulative effects accumulate when the environment does not have enough time to recover to its original condition before another outside action takes place to affect the environment.

Both the CEQA Guidelines [Section 15130(a)] and NEPA (40 CFR 1508.7, 1508.8) require a discussion of cumulative impacts of a project when a project's incremental effect is cumulatively considerable.

Identifying the major cumulative effects involves defining the impacts of the proposed action and other projects; which resources are affected; and which effects on these resources are important from a cumulative impact perspective. The resources primarily affected by this project would be wildlife habitat (fisheries and Northern spotted owl), Baker's meadowfoam, wetlands, prime farmland, and visual quality. These resources are described in detail in Chapter 5, Affected Environment, so this chapter will focus only on the cumulative effects to these resources.

The probable future projects considered can consist of a list of specific projects or a summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan designated to evaluate regional or area-wide conditions. The approach used to analyze cumulative impacts follows the "list" approach (Figure 6-1).

6.2.2 Cumulative Impacts Analysis

As part of the environmental review of the proposed bypass project, this report examines the project's contribution to cumulative impacts. This information will be used to consider project alternatives and, if necessary, mitigation.

The proposed project affects primarily wetlands; Baker's meadowfoam; upland forests, riparian woodland, and oak woodland; and visual resources. The discussion below discusses how the proposed project would provide an incremental contribution to cumulative impacts to these resources.

The geographic scope of cumulative impacts varies by technical area. For example, the boundaries for cumulative impacts for farmland are the state, county, and project area for comparison purposes; while the boundary for Baker's meadowfoam includes all of its known areas of occurrance. The boundaries are defined under each issue area, below.

Temporally, the scope of this cumulative analysis is the existing conditions and future actions that are reasonably foreseeable to the year 2028. This timeframe also includes the Willits' General Plan Revision period, which is effective through 2020. The temporal scope also includes past actions that have affected the resources addressed here.

Cumulative impacts analysis is difficult to assess thoroughly because of a lack of definitive information on future development projects. This analysis uses the best available information to estimate the proposed project's potential contribution to cumulative effects on the general project area and on the region. Included in this analysis are the proposed bypass alternatives and other reasonably foreseeable future projects (Figure 6-1). Except for the Willits Bypass, which is proposed for construction in 2005, the only other foreseeable projects with known construction dates are the Holly Street signal project (6/2003) and the wastewater treatment expansion (11/2004). No construction dates have been established for the other projects; however, they are expected to be implemented by the year 2028.

Figure 6-1. Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Projects

- The proposed Willits Bypass Project (start of construction - 2005)
- Willits wastewater treatment expansion to accommodate projected growth in Willits and Brooktrails (construction start - 11/2004; completion 6/2006)
- A second access to the Brooktrails subdivision
- Traffic signal at Holly and Main (U.S. 101) Street (construction 6/2003)
- Improvements to Northwestern Pacific Railroad, including slide restoration that will open the railroad north of Willits
- Land use changes in Willits, including a zoning change in the City's southeastern corner from residential estate to manufacturing (circa 1997) and the adoption of a specific plan for the redevelopment of downtown Willits (planned for 2003)
- Enhanced pedestrian, bicycle, and hiking trail facilities within Willits
- Expansion of the Mendocino County Museum at Commercial Street

Source: Willits Bypass Community Impact Assessment (Caltrans 2001).

6.2.2.1 Build-out in Brooktrails and Willits

The community of Brooktrails would provide for up to 4,000 single-family residences at build-out. However, continued build-out is not possible until the existing infrastructure is expanded. Ultimate build-out of this area is anticipated to require forty to eighty years. Thus, it appears unlikely that unplanned-for growth in the Brooktrails area is possible within the given 20-year timeframe, and so is beyond the scope of this cumulative analysis.

The city's preferred growth scenario, as presented in its General Plan, provides for 830 additional residences by 2020, as well as increased commercial and industrial activity. In addition, while the existing water capacity would provide for 1,840 additional residences, the General Plan suggests that it is more reasonable to restrict

this number to 900 to 1,000 additional residences, given current water storage facilities. Therefore, this moderate growth scenario would not be a major contributor to cumulative impacts.

6.2.2.2 Wastewater Treatment Facility

Willits is proposing expansion of its wastewater treatment facility to accommodate both Brooktrails and Willits growth. The city has purchased 160 acres next to its existing facility for the expansion.

6.2.2.3 Mendocino County Railroad History Project

The county created three acres of wetlands to mitigate for an equal amount of wetlands filled by the museum expansion project. Therefore, the project resulted in no net loss of wetlands and does not contribute to cumulative impacts.

6.2.2.4 Expansion of Multi-modal Facilities

Expansion of public transit and bicycle/pedestrian facilities are an overall benefit to the community and region and would not contribute to cumulative impacts. Repairs to the Northwestern Pacific Railroad facilities will allow the railroad to expand freight services; its future goals are to establish passenger excursion trains and eventually to provide regular passenger commute service.

6.2.2.5 Proposed Willits Bypass

As noted previously, because most of the Willits Bypass alternatives are proposed as controlled access freeways, there would be minimal growth-inducing effects, with the exception of Alternative E3. Alternative E3 is the only alternative that would provide an interchange at S.R. 20. Access at S.R. 20 and an interchange west of Willits could create the potential for growth inducement (e.g., service station, restaurants, etc.) around that interchange location. The incremental contribution to cumulative impacts of interchange-type growth would be minimal if each project implemented mitigation measures to minimize project impacts. However, commercial development at that location could result in an adverse impact since it would be a change in land use from rural to urban uses. Resources that might be adversely impacted include visual/open space and biological resources.

6.2.2.6 Second Access at Brooktrails

A second access road to Brooktrails residential development has been proposed near Wild Oat Canyon (near the northern Willits city limits).

6.2.2.7 Proposed Hopland Bypass

Caltrans is proposing to construct a four-lane freeway or expressway bypass of the community of Hopland, on U.S. 101 in southern Mendocino County (from KP 14.2-28.3 / PM 8.8-17.6). The project is being proposed to reduce operational conflicts, accommodate existing and future traffic demand, reduce travel time, increase safety, improve air quality, reduce noise in Hopland, and provide the facility concept identified in the "Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan." All of the proposed alignments potentially would affect oak woodlands, riparian forest and pre-historic cultural resources. Eenvironmental studies have begun recently, however, results of these studies will not be available until some time in 2003.

6.2.3 Biological Resources

6.2.3.1 Study Boundary

The evaluation area for cumulative effects for biological resources is the immediate Willits area, the Little Lake Valley, and the surrounding foothills. This boundary was selected for biological resources because this area would be most influenced by the bypass and is within the same watershed of upper Outlet Creek. An exception to this geographic boundary is in considering cumulative impacts to Baker's meadowfoam, because of the rarity of this plant species. In this instance, cumulative impacts to Baker's meadowfoam include the Willits area, where the largest population of the plant occurs; the Laytonville population; the Summit Valley population; and the Hulls Valley population.

6.2.3.2 Cumulative Impacts to Upland Forests, Riparian Woodland, and Oak Woodland

Of the foreseeable projects listed, those that would contribute to cumulative impacts to upland forests, riparian woodland, and oak woodland, would be the second access to Brooktrails, removal of borrow material at Oil Well Hill for the proposed bypass, and construction of any of the bypass alternatives (particularly Alternative E3). Adding to these impacts are past activities in the project area, such as timber harvesting and clearing for agriculture, which have removed these habitat types. Woodlands have been cleared to enhance rangeland productivity or to convert natural habitat into land for hay production. Under natural conditions, Little Lake Valley would support more extensive riparian woodlands than exist today. With implementation of proposed mitigation measures, it is expected that, in the long term, upland forests and oak woodland will be approximately the same or improved over

the existing condition. It is expected that riparian forests will be improved over the existing condition, with implementation of the proposed mitigation measures.

6.2.3.3 Cumulative Impacts to Wetlands

Past activities in the project area have changed the hydrology of portions of the Little Lake Valley. Property owners have constructed irrigation ditches, rechannelized creeks, and blocked storm drains to control the flow of water in the Little Lake Valley to grow crops and manage rangeland. Before wood chips were a valuable commodity, area lumber mills were known to dispose of wood chips in the valley east of U.S. 101.

Proposed expansion of the Willits wastewater treatment facility would directly impact wetland resources because of its location on the valley floor. The 160 acres of land, which the city has purchased next to the existing facility for the proposed expansion, is composed nearly entirely of wetlands. When ACOE determines the extent of wetland impact the expansion would have, the agency will coordinate with the city on appropriate mitigation.

The proposed bypass would impact from approximately 15 acres to 129 acres of wetlands, depending on the alternative. Mitigation in the form of wetlands creation to achieve ACOE's no net loss requirement is discussed in Chapter 5.

As identified in the Willits General Plan, industrial development is zoned in the area of East Hill Road in Willits. Other existing industrial development occurs in this area and development would continue to occur in this portion of Willits. This development would have potential impacts to wetland resources in the immediate vicinity.

It is ACOE's policy that mitigation achieves no net loss of wetlands and that mitigation is on-site if feasible; therefore, taken together, the above projects would not contribute to cumulative wetland losses in Mendocino County.

6.2.3.4 Cumulative Impacts to Baker's Meadowfoam

Baker's meadowfoam is found only in Mendocino County, with several populations in Little Lake Valley, and one population each in the Laytonville area north of Willits and the Summit Valley and Hulls Valley areas north of Covelo (northeast of Willits). There are 31 populations in Little Lake Valley, ranging in size from thousands to

many millions of plants. Baker's meadowfoam presently occupies portions of Little Lake Valley where it was probably historically absent. The new occurrences are probably a result of valley-wide drainage projects that converted extensive areas of marshland into meadows and the clearing of riparian woodlands that exposed new areas for meadow habitat to establish. Large Baker's meadowfoam populations occur in areas with the landscape position, soil, and hydrology that would have supported a riparian woodland. Further, Baker's meadowfoam occurs in areas today that were marshlands prior to enhanced drainage of the valley. The plant's current distribution, due to agricultural practices in Little Lake Valley and the growth of non-native perrenials, suggests that the species has the potential for wider distribution. However, the species is absent from large areas with soil, hydrology, and vegetation conditions similar to those at known occupied sites, and a valley wide analysis would be required to assess whether its net distribution has increased or decreased as a result of changes induced by human land use practices.

Land conversion near Willits, Laytonville, and Covelo has likely extirpated populations that occurred there. In addition, drainage improvements in Little Lake Valley, and possible elsewhere within its range, have converted wet meadows to nonwetlands, but this loss may have been compensated by conversion of marsh to wet meadow.

Currently, the only land development projects that would contribute to impacts to Baker's meadowfoam populations are the proposed Willits bypass project and the city's wastewater treatment expansion project. The wastewater treatment expansion project would remove from one-half to three-quarters of an acre of Baker's meadowfoam, depending on final project design. The city has requested authorization from CDFG to establish additional populations of Baker's meadowfoam through a seed collecting and transplanting program, within a 15-acre on-site mitigation area. While Baker's meadowfoam is very adaptable to disturbed conditions, CDFG and others have found that transplanting was effective in only 15 percent of cases studied. A population located in the Little Lake Valley on the Rust Ranch is under a conservation easement and is being monitored by the rare plant coordinator for the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) for the Mendocino Chapter. With successful mitigation for Baker's meadowfoam, there will be no cumulative impact to the sustainability of the species.

6.2.3.5 Cumulative Impacts to Wildlife Habitat (Fisheries and Northern Spotted Owl)

Past activities in the project area, such as timber harvesting and clearing for agriculture, have removed riparian and woodland habitat types that can support fisheries and Northern spotted owl. Woodlands have been cleared to enhance rangeland productivity or to convert natural habitat into land for hay production. Under natural conditions, Little Lake Valley would support more extensive riparian woodlands than exist today. These past activities along with reasonably foreseeable projects, including the proposed Willits Bypass, are not expected to impact the long-term sustainability of wildlife habitat. The successful implementation of mitigation measures for the proposed project are expected to provide desirable habitat for these species.

6.2.4 Hydrology and Water Quality

The 194 sq km (75 sq mi) Little Lake Valley watershed is contained within the Outlet Creek Hydrologic Shed Area. This 422 sq km (163 sq mi) area in turn is a subshed of the Eel River Hydrologic Unit, with an area of over 9,000 sq km (3,500 sq mi). All surface waters from the project area enter into Outlet Creek, a major tributary to the Eel River. The Eel River flows northward through Humboldt County, where it discharges to the Pacific Ocean. For this analysis, the boundary for the cumulative impacts analysis for water quality is the Little Lake Valley watershed.

Planned and foreseeable future development in the project vicinity could result in temporary degradation of water quality in the Little Lake Valley watershed due to ground disturbance and construction activities. The proposed bypass project would incrementally contribute to short-term water quality impacts. Applying erosion control measures required by local, state, and federal agencies would ensure that the project's incremental contribution to cumulative impacts would be minimized because it would be implementing its fair share of protective measures. If implemented as part of each planned development project, these measures would also reduce the additive impacts caused by cumulative development.

Existing and future development in the project vicinity could result in degradation of water quality in the Little Lake Valley watershed over the long-term due to urban runoff. However, implementation of the bypass project would improve the level of service along Main Street and provide an acceptable level of service on the new project corridor. Reducing congestion means less braking, shifting, and accelerating,

which in turn reduces the quantities of brake and clutch dust, exhaust particles, and oil drips that accumulate on the roadway. In addition, the final project design and construction would be in conformance with all conditions and requirements set forth in the NPDES storm water permit adopted by the RWQCB, North Coast Region, which would further reduce urban pollutant loading.

None of the proposed valley alternatives would have an adverse effect on the base floodplain elevation. If a build alternative were selected, detailed studies would be performed to determine additional design features needed to minimize flood-related impacts such as runoff rates. Cumulatively, future development in the project vicinity (adding pavement in the base floodplain or in the hills west of Willits) could result in adverse flood-related impacts. The extent, frequency, and duration of flooding would require extensive hydrologic and hydraulic modeling that is impossible at this time because data essential to running those models, such as the location and areal extent of paved surfaces in future probable projects, do not exist presently. Therefore, any models or projections would be wholly speculative. The lead agency should require developers to analyze the hydrologic and hydraulic impacts of any future proposed developments and to minimize and/or mitigate impacts to a level of acceptance.

6.2.5 Prime Farmland

The cumulative analysis for farmland is the entire county of Mendocino, because of the rapid rate of loss of this important resource. The State Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring program has not mapped Mendocino County yet, so exact farmland conversion and other pertinent information, are not available; however, close estimates were provided by the Mendocino County Agricultural Commissioner.

Out of 2,246,400 acres of land in Mendocino County, 94,039 acres or 4.19 percent is considered prime agricultural soils (NRCS-USDA figures). Of that amount, much is unavailable and covered by roads, highways, cities, parks, and other land uses. While growth is very slow in Mendocino County, settlement patterns have tended to occurr in areas dominated by prime soils. Only one-third, or approximately 35,000 acres, of prime farmland remain available for agricultural use. Besides the unavailability of prime farmland, changes in hydrology as a result of agricultural and other human uses have affected the quality and use of prime farmland.

The build alternatives for the Willits bypass project either approach or exceed the 1984 Farmland Protection and Policy Act 160-point threshold in their conversion of prime and unique farmland to other uses. Biological conservation easements that would be implemented for construction of the build alternatives would help to mitigate for impacts to farmlands in the project area. This proposed mitigation would reduce the project's incremental contribution to cumulative farmland impacts.

6.3 Irreversible Environmental Impacts

The CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.2) require that an EIR address any irreversible environmental changes that would be involved in the proposed action. The proposed project would result in irreversible environmental changes if key resources would be degraded or destroyed to the degree that they could not be restored. The proposed project would not result in an irreversible commitment of natural resources, nor would the construction of the proposed project require a substantial commitment of energy resources (i.e., fossil fuels). The proposed project would accommodate an existing population in the area and region.

6.4 Environmental Effects That Cannot Be Avoided If The Project Is Implemented

An EIR must include a description of those impacts identified as significant and unavoidable if the proposed project were constructed [CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.2(b)]. A project results in unavoidable impacts if mitigation does not reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level or if no mitigation or only partial mitigation is feasible. Depending on the alternative, the project was found to have unavoidable impacts related to biological resources, geological hazards, community impact, and potentially, to hazardous waste sites.

Landsliding and Seismicity

- Even with specialized foundation treatments, specialized cut slope and fill slope design, mechanically reinforced embankments, stabilization trenches, catchment areas, and specialized subsurface drainage techniques, the ***potential for landslides*** would remain high for Alternative E3.

Community Impacts

- Alternative E3 would require 114 ***residential displacements.***

- Alternative E3: Based on the adverse impacts associated with disruptions of community cohesion and with the relocation and provision of replacement housing, Alternative E3 would cause disproportionately high and adverse impacts ***to minority or low-income populations***.

Biological Resources: Special Status Fish Species

- Alternatives C1T (north segment) and E3: Where extensive riparian vegetation would be removed by large channel realignments, particularly in ***critical salmonid habitat*** areas, there may be severe consequences to the habitat quality by ***increased stream temperatures***.

Biological Resources: Waters of the U.S.

- Alternative C1T: The greatest impact of this alternative would be the removal of ***wetlands and other waters of the U.S.*** (52.3 ha [129.1 ac]). Alternative C1T (north segment) would also require the realignment of approximately 400 m (1,300 ft) of Mill Creek and 1,600 m (5,250 ft) of Outlet Creek.

Biological Resources: Special Status Wildlife

- Alternative E3: The direct and indirect impact to intermittent streams resulting from culvert construction on the smaller drainages within this alignment could have the greatest impacts on ***foothill yellow-legged frog and northwestern pond turtle*** and their habitats.
- Alternative E3: The magnitude of impacts resulting from construction of Alternative E3 and the difficulty of reestablishing mid- and old-growth forested habitat that provide optimal habitat for ***Northern spotted owl and red tree vole***.

Biological Resources: Sensitive Plant Communities

- Alternative E3: Would impact 32.8 ha (81 ac) of ***sensitive plant communities.*** The loss of 22.7 ha (56.1 ac) of oak woodlands, in particular, would be adverse, because of the length of time required for oak trees to grow into stands of mature trees that could provide the functions and values required by cavity nesting birds, raptors, and other wildlife. Other plant communities affected by the Alternative E3 alignment would include approximately 97.8 ha (241.6 ac) of mixed north-slope forest and 67.6 ha (167.0 ac) of annual grassland.

Hazardous Waste Sites

- Alternative J1T is the only build alternative that would involve potential *hazardous waste properties*. There is an unknown risk related to clean-up costs associated with this alternative. Under CEQA, this potentially significant impact is considered significant.

6.5 Relationship Between Short-term Uses of the Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-term Productivity

This project is consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan, which outlines the ultimate transportation plan for the region, including local road and highway improvements. This Plan was developed to accommodate current and proposed land uses and the associated projected traffic. Depending on the selected alternative, construction of the project would result in long-term environmental impacts such as:

- Removing large amounts of oak woodland
- Disturbing fisheries habitat
- Removing special-status plant species and special status wildlife habitat
- Disturbing wetlands and waters of the U.S.

Conversely, the project would result in two transportation systems (U.S. 101 and Willits' Main Street) operating more efficiently for their intended purposes. The long-term productivity of the project for Willits would include:

- Decreased congestion and improved safety within the downtown core.
- Ability for the city to implement its economic development plan downtown, which includes expanding its pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

The long-term productivity of the project for the region would include:

- Efficient inter-regional movement of goods, services and people would be enhanced with a bypass around Willits
- Mitigation for the bypass would contribute to the preservation on-site and off-site of some agricultural lands and of wetland habitat and sensitive plant communities, in perpetuity.

CHAPTER 7 Permits Required For This Project

Section 404 Individual Permit

An Individual Permit (Clean Water Act Section 404) will be required from ACOE for impacts on wetlands and waters of the U.S. ACOE issues the permit; however, USEPA has oversight and override authority over the permit. The NEPA/404 Integration Process that is associated with this permit is described in Appendices G and H.

National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit

On behalf of USEPA, the SWRCB has issued a statewide general NPDES storm water permit to Caltrans for all construction activities having greater than two ha (five ac) of ground disturbance. The general permit will apply to the proposed project and Caltrans will file a Notice of Intent with SWRCB to comply with the statewide permit. In addition, a project-specific NPDES permit will also be required for this project because impacts are greater than 2 ha (5 ac). As part of this permit, a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be prepared. The Plan requires that pollution sources be identified and it commits to implementing storm water pollution prevention measures to reduce pollutants in storm water discharges from construction sites both during construction and after construction has been completed.

Endangered Species Act (Incidental Take Permit)

FHWA and Caltrans currently are in informal consultation with USFWS and NMFS under Section 7 of the ESA. Following selection of a preferred alternative, after public circulation of the Draft EIR/EIS, FHWA and Caltrans will enter into formal consultation with USFWS and NMFS. At this time also, biological assessments on Northern spotted owl, coho salmon, Northern California steelhead, and California coastal chinook salmon will be prepared, which will identify impacts of the selected project alternative and proposed mitigation for each affected species. USFWS and NMFS have authority to issue opinions and permits that may affect federally listed species. Consultation will result in a Biological Opinion, which may include reasonable mitigation measures and may include an Incidental Take Statement if there is a No-Jeopardy opinion.

Section 401 Water Quality Certification

Projects that require a Section 404 permit from ACOE are also required to obtain a Section 401 Water Quality Certification or Waiver from the RWQCB.

Streambed Alteration Permit

Pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 1601, a Streambed Alteration Permit will need to be obtained from the California Department of Fish and Game, for any of the build alternatives selected as the result of work that would occur within the natural flow or bed, channel or bank of streams in the project area.

National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants

For alternatives that require acquisition of structures, an asbestos survey will be completed prior to demolition activities. Mendocino County AQMD permits (National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants - NESHAP) are required for demolition.

Asbestos inspections for a NESHAP permit are done by Cal/OSHA certified inspectors. Regulated Asbestos Containing Materials (RACMs), Category I and II materials are identified during the survey and are noted on the NESHAP permit**.** All RACM is abated by licensed asbestos contractors prior to demolition.

Surface Mining and Reclamation Act Permit

Any of the valley alternatives would require a SMARA permit before excavating embankment material at the designated borrow site. A permit application, an approved Reclamation Plan, and financial assurance would be submitted to the California Department of Conservation, which issues the permit.

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CHAPTER 10 Comments and Coordination

Since 1987, Caltrans has conducted considerable public outreach on this project. This chapter discusses coordination with the public and with federal, state, and local agencies. The NEPA/404 coordination effort is discussed in a separate section (Appendices G and H).

10.1 Responsible Agencies

Because of their jurisdiction by law, the following agencies will issue permits for the project:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)

In 1995, and again in 1999, each of the cooperating agencies and the trustee agency agreed on the Purpose and Need Statement, the modal choice, and the alternatives that are studied in this DEIR/EIS. Letters from these agencies documenting their participation in the environmental review process and their formal concurrence are located in Appendix G.

10.2 Trustee Agency

The California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) is considered a Trustee Agency (CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15386), because it has jurisdiction by law over natural resources, that could be affected by the project, that are held in trust for the people of the State of California. CDFG has participated since the 1989 Scoping process and establishment of the Technical Advisory Groups in the review and development of this project.

10.3 Coordination with Agencies

Coordination with interested resource agencies is ongoing. These agencies have been involved in the development of the proposed project since 1989 when they became members of a Technical Advisory Group (discussed below) for the project. The resource agency representatives remained members on the Technical Advisory Group through the 1995 NEPA/404 concurrence meeting. When studies resumed in 1998 after a three-year hiatus due to funding shortages and resource redirection these agencies were invited to participate on the PDT. They have participated in PDT meetings, focused team meetings, field reviews, a second NEPA/404 concurrence meeting, and they have provided ongoing review and comment on technical studies for this project.

Since 1991, ACOE, USEPA, USFWS, and NMFS have been acting as cooperating agencies. These agencies approved the project's Purpose and Need Statement and modal choice, they participated in the selection of a range of alternatives and certain project design elements, and they agreed to the elimination of certain alternatives from further study. Letters from these agencies are located in Appendix G.

10.4 Notice of Preparation and Notice of Intent

A Notice of Intent (to prepare an EIS) was published in the Federal Register on December 7, 1989 and a Notice of Preparation (of an EIR) was submitted to the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) on December 15, 1989. A list of interested agencies, groups, and individuals to whom Caltrans and OPR sent a Notice of Preparation (NOP) is included in Appendix D.

The following agencies responded to the NOP and NOI. Their letters are included in Appendix E.

Agency	Date	Issues/Concerns
U.S. Dept of the Interior, Bureau of Mines	1/16/90	Possible impact to mineral properties that might exist in project area.
Mendocino County Museum	12/21/89	Highway markers that designate location of Museum.

Agency	Date	Issues/Concerns
California Department of Food and Agriculture	1/5/90	Requested discussion in DEIR/EIS of the following: farmland impact assessment; Williamson Act contract land; mitigation measures for ag land; cumulative and growth-inducing impacts to ag land. Suggested coordination with certain ag-related agencies.
Mendocino County Water Agency	1/8/90	Depletion of aggregate resource to build project and resulting impact to fisheries.
California Regional Water Quality Control Board, North Coast Region	1/16/90	Compliance with Water Quality Control Plan for North Coast Region, erosion control measures, response to hazardous material spills.
County of Mendocino Department of Planning and Building Services	1/16/90	Impacts to water and air quality, biological resources, traffic, inconsistencies with General Plan.
Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians	1/16/90	Possible impacts of western alignment to the Sherwood Valley Rancheria.
California Department of Fish and Game	2/9/90	Wetlands, streams and creeks; animal crossings; scope and content of DEIR/EIS.
City of Willits	12/15/89	Supports a bypass.
USEPA	2/2/90	Water quality and riparian/wetland habitat.
USFWS	1/16/90	Streams and wetland areas, including riparian wetlands; fisheries and other wildlife; necessary studies; mitigation.

10.5 Public Outreach

A Willits Bypass Public Participation Plan, approved in August 1998, was prepared to guide the public participation process during the preparation of the Draft EIR/EIS and selection of a preferred alternative. The Plan is a guide for accomplishing the following objectives:

- Carry out the public participation requirements of CEQA and NEPA;
- Provide citizens with a role in the environmental and decision-making process;
- Communicate clearly the project's purpose and need;
- Instill confidence in the environmental review process;
- Allow all persons, regardless of their views, with an opportunity to express their opinions about the environmental/community effects of the bypass alternatives; and

- Allow individuals and interest groups to interact with public agencies to exchange information and ideas.

Public workshops on the proposed Willits bypass were held in Willits on April 6, 1988 and March 7, 1991 to discuss feasibility of constructing a four-lane bypass of the City and to solicit input from all interested parties. Public scoping meetings also took place in Willits December 15, 1987 and December 5, 1989. Attendance at the workshops has been good. For example, more than 360 people attended the March 1991 open house.

Six newsletters have been sent to Willits' residents from 1989 to the present: Fall 1989, Summer 1990, Summer 1991, Fall 1993, Fall 1999, Winter 1998/99, and Winter 2001. A copy of the latest newsletter is included in Appendix K. In addition to newsletters, Caltrans maintains a Willits Bypass website at http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist3/departments/planning/willits/willits.htm.

Since May 1991, Willits Bypass Project Development Team (PDT) meetings have been open to the interested public to attend. Caltrans and FHWA have been committed to notifying individuals and interested groups of scheduled PDT meetings, and to sending out meeting agenda information and minutes.

Since May 1992, Caltrans Project Management, Design, and Environmental representatives have regularly attended Willits City Council meetings to update the City Council and the Willits community on the Willits Bypass Project. Caltrans has also presented project updates to the Brooktrails Township Community Services District, the Mendocino County Panning Commission and the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors. Community member attendance and participation has been encouraged at all the meetings.

Early in the planning stages, Caltrans formed two technical advisory groups composed of representatives of special interest groups, state and Federal agencies, and local business. The TAGs represented regulatory and resource agencies, transportation-impacted agencies and business groups, citizen groups, and media representatives. Each TAG provided input and recommendations to the Project Development Team and TAG members, in turn, disseminated project information to the groups they represented. Following is a list of TAG participants:

Dan Matson, California Dept of Forestry and Fire Protection
Betsy and Jack Guggolz, Califorina Native Plant Society
Geri Hulse-Stephens, Califorina Native Plant Society
Albert Wellman, California Regional Water Quality Control Board
James Hamilton, California Trout
Wendy Squires, California Western Railroad
Assemblywoman Virginia Strom-Martin, State Assembly
(Field Representative Coleen Henderson)
Senator Wesley Chesbro, State Senate
(Field Representative Jennifer Puser)
Gordon Wagenet, 101 Redwood Incorporated
Gary Owen, Friends of the Valley
Christopher Johnson, Harwood Products
Kevin Erich, Howard Memorial Hospital
Larry Cox, Lousiana Pacific Corporation
David Bengston, Mendocino County Agricultural Commission
Tony Ortiz, Community Member
Phil Towle, Mendocino County Air Quality
Perry and Coleen Smith, Mendocino County Cattleman Association
Eugene Calvert, Mendocino County Department of Transportation
Helen Bartow, Mendocino County Farm Bureau
Mendocino County Historical Society
Kenneth Rich, Muir Mill Road Homeowners Association
Debbie Plias-Treadway, Native American Heritage Commission
North Coast Rail Authority
William Ray, Save All The Valley Eternally
Phil Shuster, Schuster's Transportation
Johanna Burkhardt, Sierra Club
Mason Cook, Willits Automotive
Lynn Kennelly, Willits Chamber of Commerce
Ellen and David Drell, Willits Environmental Center
Marsha Wilgis, Willits Farm Bureau
BG Hefflefinger, Willits News
Willits Revit-ED Committee
John Ford, Community Member
Ed & Erlyne Schmidbauer, Community Members

Willits Project Development Team

The current Willits Project Development Team is composed of the following members:

Caltrans Members:

Lena Ashley, Project Manager
Don Rushton, Design – Project Engineer
Andrew Brandt, Design Senior
Guy Luther, Transportation Planning
Ralph Martinelli, Traffic Safety
John Carson, Traffic Operations
Larry Brohman, Traffic Study/Transportation
Marsha Freese, Landscape Architect
Dennis Jagoda, Hydraulics
Rich Thompson, Construction
Dan Stiles, Construction*
Terry Davis, Maintenance
Steve Wiman, Structures
Cher Daniels, Environmental Senior
Nancy MacKenzie, Project Environmental Coordinator
Don Schmoldt, Project Biologist
Rich Weaver, Headquarters Environmental Management

External Members:

Bob Whitney, Brooktrails Township Community Services District
Michael Chapman, Brooktrails Township Community Services District*
Raymond Hall, Mendocino County Planning Director
Patti Campbell, Mendocino Coudny Board of Supervisors
Tom Lucier, Mendocino County Board of Supervisors*
Phil Dow, Mendocino Council of Governments
Supervisor Paul Kelley, North Coastal Counties Supervisory Association
Alan Falleri, Willits Planning Department
Bruce Burton, Willits City Council
Robin Phillips, Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo
Captain Kim King, California Highway Patrol
Sergeant Hersom, California Highway Patrol*
Carl Wilcox, California Dept. of Fish & Game*
Fred Botti, California Dept. of Fish & Game

Pete Straub, U.S. Army Corps of Enginees
Mike Monroe, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Randy Brown, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Tom Daugherty, U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service

Alternate PDT Member